

Practical Jokes.

(For The Free Lance)

Some time ago there appeared in The Free Lance what was called a joke, perpetrated by General Osborne on a man named Osborne. It seems that Osborne was very wealthy, and was a warm and intimate friend of Custer, whom he visited every year in his camp. On one of these visits Osborne, being alone in a tent at night, by Custer's order a false alarm was raised of an attack by Indians. There was a great noise, orders of officers, tramping of horses, shouting of men, blowing of bugles, and all the indications of immediate conflict. In the midst of the confusion, Custer, wearing his uniform and with a sword at his side, entered the tent in which Osborne was sitting and said to him "he was very sorry, but he could give him no help," as his first duty was to his command. Osborne was terribly alarmed, fell on his knees and begged Custer to protect him.

After sometime everything became quiet, and Custer entered Osborne's tent to laugh at him for his fears. All this may have appeared to Gen. Custer to be very funny and very smart; to me it seems to have been very mean. To subject any guest, and especially a warm and intimate friend, to humiliation and alarm is a flagrant violation of hospitality and propriety, of which I cannot conceive a gentleman to be guilty. True hospitality seeks the comfort and enjoyment, not the annoyance and distress of a guest. With few or no exceptions, practical jokes are low-bred and contemptible. The point of such jokes is found in the chagrin, apprehension or pain they inflict. A person who can enjoy the sufferings induced by such inflictions on others is utterly lacking in generosity of spirit and kindness of heart. It is said the Prince of Wales is very fond of perpetrating practical jokes, and that the flunkies he keeps around him submit without remonstrance or complaint to be the instruments or the butt of his jokes, as he may direct. A favorite joke with his Royal Highness is to direct one of his lackeys to get behind a guest or a caller and seizing his coat shirt in each hand to tear the coat from the buttons on the back up to the collar. This joke is particularly relished if the coat is new and costly. On one occasion, at least, the tables were happily turned on the jokers. A guest of the Prince, going to his room to dress for dinner, found a new coat lying on the bed. Knowing the propensity of the Prince for tear coats, and correctly supposing this coat to belong to one of "his set," the guest took off his own coat and put one that lying on the bed. The change was not noticed. After dinner, when the wine was circulating, freely one of the Prince's creatures, according to orders, went behind the guest and tore the coat up to the collar. There was great merriment until it was found that the torn coat belonged to the very man who had torn it. Then the only laughter left was the man who had worn the coat.

All practical jokes are not so rude and foolish as that which has been described, but all of them are more or less discourteous, and many of them are mean and cruel. Let them be left to those who can find pleasure in such "sport," whether they occupy exalted or humble positions.

A Broadbent, Sparta, Va.

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England's Suzerainty the Real Issue of the South African Difficulty.

[From the European Edition of the New York Herald.]

It is growing more evident every day that the real issue in the Anglo-Boer dispute is not as to the franchise or the redress of Uitlander grievances generally, but England's suzerainty, and that if war comes it will be over this question.

Whether with or without reason from his point of view, Mr. Kruger has long had the suspicion or fear that Mr. Chamberlain's aim is not simply the redress of the grievances of which he complained, but that he has ulterior designs on the independence of the Transvaal Republic. Consequently the Boer President has sought to couple with his proffered concessions a condition that England would renounce her claimed suzerainty or stipulate not to interfere hereafter in the internal affairs of the Republic. Throughout the correspondence his State Secretary insisted that England had no suzerainty rights and went so far as to declare that "from inherent right the Republic is a sovereign State"—a contention which Mr. Chamberlain pronounced "not warranted either by law or history and wholly inadmissible."

Unless one side or the other recedes from that stand evidently other means than diplomacy must be resorted to for the settlement of the issue. There is not the slightest probability that England will yield since to renounce her suzerainty right would simply be to surrender everything. If war comes it will be on the part of the Boers a struggle for independence and on the part of Great Britain a war for supremacy in South Africa. Considering England's vastly superior power the final outcome could never be in doubt, whatever might be the initial result. The only question would be as to its effect on the status of the Transvaal Republic and with how much of its present independence it would come out of the conflict. That Great Britain would not stop with an enforcement of the demand she has already made has been publicly declared by Lord Salisbury, as well as by Mr. Chamberlain. Developing as it might into a British Boer race war, the struggle could hardly fail to prove a dire catastrophe to all South Africa.

Railroads.

Potomac, Fredericksburg AND PIEDMONT RAILROAD

Schedule for 1899.

| No. 1. | LV. | ARR. | No. 2. |
|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| 8:00 a.m. | Fredericksburg | 8:15 p.m. | Fredericksburg |
| 8:15 a.m. | White | 8:30 p.m. | White |
| 8:30 a.m. | Wine Road | 8:45 p.m. | Wine Road |
| 8:45 a.m. | Robey's | 9:00 p.m. | Robey's |
| 9:00 a.m. | Screenwell | 9:15 p.m. | Screenwell |
| 9:15 a.m. | Allen | 9:30 p.m. | Allen |
| 9:30 a.m. | Furnace | 9:45 p.m. | Furnace |
| 9:45 a.m. | Brook Road | 10:00 p.m. | Brook Road |
| 10:00 a.m. | Stephens | 10:15 p.m. | Stephens |
| 10:15 a.m. | Parker | 10:30 p.m. | Parker |
| 10:30 a.m. | New Hope | 10:45 p.m. | New Hope |
| 10:45 a.m. | Finder | 11:00 p.m. | Finder |
| 11:00 a.m. | Reynolds | 11:15 p.m. | Reynolds |
| 11:15 a.m. | Verdierville | 11:30 p.m. | Verdierville |
| 11:30 a.m. | La Fayette | 11:45 p.m. | La Fayette |
| 11:45 a.m. | Unionville | 12:00 p.m. | Unionville |
| 12:00 a.m. | Nelson | 12:15 p.m. | Nelson |
| 12:15 a.m. | Taylor | 12:30 p.m. | Taylor |
| 12:30 a.m. | Orange | 12:45 p.m. | Orange |

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| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Ar. Dowell..... | 11:15 A. | 8:12 P. | 11:30 P. |
| Ar. Staunton..... | * 8:38 P. | 7:38 P. | 4:22 A. |
| Ar. Clifton Forge..... | * 8:46 P. | 8:57 P. | 6:28 A. |
| Ar. Va. Hot Springs..... | | 9:50 P. | 7:53 A. |
| Ar. White Sulphur..... | | 7:54 P. | 7:54 A. |
| Ar. Ronceverte..... | | 9:51 P. | 7:26 A. |
| Ar. Cincinnati..... | | 7:55 A. | 6:13 P. |
| Ar. Lexington..... | | 8:00 A. | 6:10 P. |
| Ar. Louisville..... | | 11:40 A. | 8:00 P. |
| Ar. Chicago..... | | 5:30 P. | 7:15 A. |
| Ar. St. Louis..... | | 6:56 P. | 7:30 A. |